

disappearance

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by [TumblingBackpacks](#)

Summary

Suddenly, he feels sixteen again, facing down at werewolf in the darkened hallway of the Shrieking Shack.

(And perhaps, if he were more aware, Severus would have realized that is *exactly* what has occurred.)

In which Severus dies to Nagini and finds himself facing off a werewolf. James reflects in the aftermath of The Prank.

backpacks's whumptober 2023

No. 1: “How many fingers am I holding up?”

second chance(s) scorned

Severus Snape gets a second chance. He's not really interested in taking it.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Dying is—surprisingly—just as he had expected.

Painful, graceless, of little consequence. Potter had his memories; from there, he could only hope that all he did would *mean* something, in the end. His vision fades into the darkness, as does the pain, and he takes his final breath hoping for peace.

Death, and what comes after—on the other hand—is a surprise.

Severus stumbles. He is standing now, though he's far closer to the ground than he's used to. He is still near the Shrieking Shack, but in the hallway leading up to it, rather than the shack itself. He's disoriented. He feels jittery. More...*raw* than he's felt in years. He doesn't like it.

Suddenly, there's a snarl, claws scratching across wood, approaching, running—

—and a werewolf is charging at him.

Suddenly, he feels sixteen again, facing down at werewolf in the darkened hallway of the Shrieking Shack. (And perhaps, if he were more aware, Severus would have realized that is *exactly* what has occurred.)

Move, his mind urges. *Move*.

But he's tired.

Those fangs in his neck, painful as they had been, were also a relief. The werewolf closes in; he can't bring himself to feel terror, he'd resigned himself to oblivion long ago, and if this is the last image that his mind had dredged up, then so be it.

Then, a blur of fur and antlers tackles the wolf out of the way.

And Severus finally, finally realizes: *this has happened before*.

James *runs*.

Sirius, what were you thinking?

Snivellus is at the Shack, and James needs to get there before Moony. He can see Snivellus's figure fade out of view as he enters, and James wants to shout after him, tell him to stop, but he's too winded, all of his energy put into his need to be quicker, to *keep going*.

He can hear Moony getting closer, the creak of old wood that they'd never been able to fully Charm silent, and he knows Snivellus hears it too; senses the danger he's walked into, and starts to turn away in apprehension—

—but James’s thoughts are brought to a halt at the same time Snivellus does the same. The impending danger does not halt, yet Snivellus has stopped trying to run, stopped trying to *escape death*.

It kicks James’s mind back into focus, and he is shifting into Prongs, charging Moony head on, knocking him out of the way.

Moony lets out a pained whimper at the impact, then retreats.

When James shifts back to himself, Snivellus doesn’t look scared or surprised or angry. Just...blank. Maybe a little disappointed, if anything at all. James is shaking from nerves.

“What is *wrong* with you?” James demands, because now that the danger has passed, it is becoming clearer that Snape hadn’t frozen out of fear. If anything, it looked like he had lost the will to do anything, that his self-preservation had vanished.

“I wish he hadn’t,” says Snape, eyes dull. His expression doesn’t change—and James realizes *that’s* what’s making him uncomfortable.

Snape had always been so...*reactive*. Easy to anger, quick to fight back, and there was no room to feel sorry for him when he’d retaliate; Snape *always* gave it as good as he’d got. It is hard to reconcile that with the boy in front of him, the one who’s first reaction to being pulled away from the sure death at the jaws of a werewolf is *dejection*, a crumpled expression of sorrow that was swiftly hidden.

If he hadn’t seen it, if the image hadn’t been burned into his mind, James would question if it had been there at all. James grabs him by the arm—again, Snape doesn’t so much as *twitch*—and drags him to the Hospital Wing.

Something is definitely wrong with him.

To James’s surprise, Dumbledore is already there. The Floo in the Hospital Wing activates a few moments after James arrives, and Pomfrey rushes over from out the fireplace. James is dishevelled and dirty, but not injured, so after a quick once-over, she moves to Snape.

Nothing. No reaction. It is seriously strange—James has never seen Snape so quiet.

“Mr Snape,” Pomfrey says, and lifts a hand in front of his face. Snape flinches slightly at the movement, then seems to chide himself for doing so. A look of concern crosses Pomfrey’s face, but she holds up three fingers, waving them slightly until she sees his gaze start to follow her movement. “How many fingers am I holding up?”

He doesn’t respond. Instead, Snape raises two fingers to his neck, lightly brushing over the skin. His breath catches; disbelieving, disappointed, despondent.

His hand is shaking, and it takes a moment to realize *Snape* is shuddering, like an unseen cold has overtaken him. His eyes are still fixed forward, but James gets the sense that he’s not really *looking* anymore.

“If I had died there,” Snape says suddenly, “would you have done anything?”

“Mr Snape,” Dumbledore seems to eye him carefully before answering, “I believe, in this case, you are very lucky that Mr Potter—”

“That’s a ‘no’, then,” says Snape, sounding more disappointed than outraged, “you would have covered up the murder, let me die without justice, making excuses for your ever-favored Gryffindors.”

“Mr Snape,” Dumbledore says again, voice growing colder, harder, and now that James is *noticing*, it is not a tone that he had ever taken with any of the Marauders, regardless of what they have done. He hadn’t even sounded this harsh with Sirius.

“If that will be *all*, Headmaster,” Snape raises his voice as he rises from where he had been seated, “then I will be taking my leave—after all, I am ever-so lucky to have been *saved*.”

Saved is said with a level of mocking sarcasm and derision that cuts right into the uncomfortable feeling twisting in James’s stomach. Snape doesn’t wait for a response before he exits the room.

“Mr Potter,” Dumbledore says to him, “I’m afraid my joints are not what they used to be; will you do me the favor of bringing Mr Snape back to continue this conversation?”

The words are said lightly, but James can read between the lines. He offers a small nod and runs off. Snape doesn’t seem to be heading back to the dungeons, though, instead turning towards the opposite corridor. Snape turns the corner, and James hears a *crack*, that almost sounds like—

—but it can’t be; can it? When James turns, sure enough, Snape is not there. Apparition shouldn’t be possible on Hogwarts grounds, especially since none of them have received their Apparition Licenses yet.

James explores the corridor, just to check he hadn’t been mistaken, that Snape hadn’t just ducked into a classroom to avoid notice, but no, there’s no one there.

He thinks Snape might just be...gone.

James doesn’t yet realize how right that thought would be.

James tells Dumbledore that he doesn’t know where Snape has gone, and the headmaster gets this sort-of pinched expression on his face that is quickly smoothed back into neutrality. He assures James that everything is fine when James asks about Remus, that he’ll handle it.

Usually, James would have no reason not to believe him. Dumbledore has always been on their side, but now, it’s making something uncomfortable twist in his stomach. That was *close*—too close. Sure, no one had gotten seriously hurt, but...

Sirius had *sent Snape to Moony*—they all knew how dangerous werewolves were to humans, that was why they had become animagi, so *why?* Snape could have *died* if James hadn't gotten there in time—if James had been a second slower. Sirius wasn't going to be punished for it, either, if Dumbledore's assurance of "handling it" meant anything.

Admittedly, that wasn't a thought that had troubled James before then, but seeing it in-person was different. This was something that *should* be punished. He doesn't want Sirius expelled or imprisoned, but James doesn't know if he's comfortable with Sirius just getting away with it.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, he wonders if this makes him a hypocrite; he'd gotten away with a lot because they had the Map to avoid professors, his Cloak to avoid witnesses, and the favor of the staff. He had felt far more smug and triumphant during those times.

James hesitates at the doorway of the dormitories, steeling himself.

He pushes the door open.

Sirius is there; he's relaxed, if slightly confused. "Why'd you rush out so fast?"

"Why would you *do that*?" James demands. Sirius bristles at the sudden change in mood. "Snape could have died in there!"

"Did he?"

"No, but—"

"Then it's fine! No need to make it a big deal—it was just a scare."

"Only because I got there in time!" James shouts. "Moony was seconds away from—from."

"Hooray, good job. Snivellus gets to live another day," Sirius says, and it's so flippant that it makes James indescribably frustrated. "Close call, yeah, but we've had closer, right?"

"Sirius—" James starts, then takes in a breath.

He *can't*. He can't do this right now.

"Nothing *happened*, James. Why are you so—?"

"*Goodnight*, Sirius." His words are clipped, and he brushes past Sirius to get to his bed, drawing the curtains, and trying not to think about what might have happened if he hadn't made it in time.

Peter acts as a buffer between James and Sirius at breakfast the next morning. Remus is still in the Hospital Wing. James doesn't know if Pomfrey or Dumbledore has told Remus what happened yet—would it be better hearing it from a professor or from a friend?

James doesn't know.

James feels like he doesn't know much of anything lately.

James scans the Slytherin table for Snape, but he's not there. The pit in his stomach sits a little heavier. Where had he gone last night? And why hadn't he returned?

Then, because Fate hates him, Lily Evans notices where he's staring, follows his gaze, and makes the same realization that he had made. She turns on him, already defensive.

"What did you do?" she says in a low tone. "Where is he?"

She doesn't need to say who they're talking about. He already knows. They both do.

Unconsciously, James glances over at Sirius. She notices that, too.

Evans looks between them and demands again: "What – did – you – do."

"Nothing!" Sirius snaps. "Don't you have anything better to do than babysit your pet greaseball?"

Evans's eyes flash dangerously. Wordlessly, she stands, walking over to the Slytherin table, right up to Rosier. She hates them—Rosier, Muciber, Avery, the entire lot; all of them except Snape—but she knows that they won't hex her in the crowded hall with the staff watching.

James can't hear what they're saying, but the shake of Rosier's head is evident enough.

Evans turns back. She meets his eyes across the hall, and narrows her own.

The message is clear: Not even the Slytherins know where Snape is, and she blames him for it.

Several things to note: Headmasters have the unique ability of being able to Apparate within the Hogwarts grounds. Magic tends to transcend time. Some events happen *because* of actions taken, others happen *despite* them.

Severus Snape does not return to Hogwarts.

Voldemort's war rages on.

End Notes

First attempt at Whumptober! I have prompts 1-6 and 27-31 pre-written and will be posting those by the matching day ^^

I do have 7-26 outlined, but I didn't have the time to finish them, so just shelving those to potentially finish/post after October.

All of the fics in this series will be following the same theme of "Snape time travels; is Not Happy about it" (though each one will be a standalone oneshot) because I wanted to write more Time Travelling Severus.

Enjoy!

UP NEXT: looking backward (Severus&Lily)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!